



## **Department of Energy**

Bonneville Power Administration  
1520 Kelly Place  
Walla Walla, Washington 99362

October 12, 2001

In reply refer to: PTS/Walla Walla

### **To: People Interested in the Horse Heaven Wind Project**

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is proposing to purchase power from a wind generation project proposed by Washington Winds Incorporated (Washington Winds). This letter briefly describes the proposal and the process and schedule that BPA will follow. You are invited to attend an upcoming public meeting where you can learn more about the proposal and submit comments. If you cannot attend this meeting, other ways to be involved and provide input are described below.

#### **Proposal**

The Horse Heaven Wind Project (Project) would be located southwest of the town of Kennewick in Benton County, Washington in the Horse Heaven Hills. The Project, constructed and operated by Washington Winds, would consist of a wind generation site and the transmission line that would connect the Project to an existing BPA transmission line (see enclosed maps). The wind generation site consists of privately owned land that is used mostly for farming, with a few homes within and near the Project.

In the wind generation site, as many as 250 tower-mounted wind turbines would be constructed in lines called "strings." Washington Winds is considering using turbines ranging from 900 kilowatts (900-kW) to 2,000-kW output each. To understand how much power these turbines produce, it is helpful to know that 1,000 kilowatts of wind power (1 megawatt) can serve about 200-300 homes. The height of the turbines would range from approximately 246 feet to 390 feet, depending upon the type of turbine chosen for the site.

Other Project elements that would be constructed in the wind generation portion of the Project include small pad-mounted transformers located at the base of each wind turbine tower, access roads, a fenced substation, power lines (mainly underground) connecting the turbine strings to the substation, several meteorological towers, and a building that would serve as the operations and maintenance facility. Project elements would mainly be situated in agricultural lands, and if possible, will be located to avoid any sensitive resources found during upcoming field studies.

BPA's initial participation in the Project would be limited to the purchase of about 150 to 175 MW, with an option to purchase up to 225 MW in the future. Factoring in the effects of periods of inadequate wind and other non-operational time, this will not exceed 50 average megawatts. BPA will provide transmission services from an existing BPA transmission line. A proposed

transmission line would lead from the wind generation site to an existing BPA transmission line located to the south, near the town of Plymouth, Washington. The proposed 13-mile long transmission line would be either a 230/287-kilovolt (kV) or 345-kV line, depending on which existing BPA transmission line BPA determines can accept the output of the Project. The transmission line would run mainly near or along Plymouth Road. The power would then be made available for use by all customers of BPA.

Washington Winds would like to start construction and begin commercial generation of power in 2002. The Project would likely operate for at least 20 years. Farming activities could continue adjacent to wind turbines during the operation of the wind generation facility.

### **Alternatives**

The two alternatives BPA will study are the action alternative, to purchase and transmit the power from the Project and the no action alternative, to not purchase and transmit the power, and therefore not enable its construction or its environmental effects.

### **Public Meeting**

Before we begin to assess the environmental impacts of the Project, we would like to hear from you. What questions do you have? What resources should we study? BPA invites you to learn more about the Project and comment on it by attending the following public meeting:

**Monday, October 29, 2001**  
5:00 – 8:00 p.m.  
Benton County Public Utility District Building  
2721 West 10th Avenue  
Kennewick, Washington

This meeting will provide an opportunity to meet a representative of Washington Winds and the BPA Project team. Project team members will be available to describe the proposal, answer questions, and receive comments. Because the meeting will be an informal, open house without a presentation, you are invited to come any time between 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.

### **Environmental Analysis of the Proposal**

BPA will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which will describe the existing environment and the effects on the environment from the temporary construction activities and the ongoing operation of the wind generation site and proposed transmission line.

“Environment” includes both the human and physical environment. The environmental analyses for recent wind power projects in the region have addressed potential environmental issues, including visual issues, noise levels, impacts to cultural resources, socio-economic ramifications, effects on rare plant and animal species, and impacts to wildlife, including migratory birds. Depending on the characteristics of the site and comments received, some areas may merit more study than others. The EIS will consider cumulative effects to the environment in a local, regional and society-as-a-whole context.

Benton County will be a “cooperating agency,” as contemplated by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).

### **Process**

Washington Winds has applied for a conditional use permit from Benton County and initiated ongoing field surveys in April of 2001, to identify bird species that utilize or fly over the site. BPA will identify any additional studies that should be conducted, in part through comments submitted by tribes, federal and state agencies, interest groups, and concerned citizens.

**If you comment by November 14, 2001, your ideas can affect the scope of our environmental studies.** To submit any comments you may have, you can give them to us at the public meetings, leave a message on our toll-free comment line at 1-800-622-4519, send an e-mail to [comment@bpa.gov](mailto:comment@bpa.gov), or mail them to: Bonneville Power Administration, P.O. Box 12999, Portland, OR 97212. Faxes will also be accepted at 503-230-3285. **Please reference the Horse Heaven Wind Project in all communications.**

Your comments will help BPA to:

- Understand public concerns related to the Project,
- Design the Project to best meet the long term power needs of BPA’s customers while protecting the environment, and
- Direct the environmental analysis based on any public concerns before committing any natural or financial resources.

After BPA considers comments, a Draft EIS will be developed and circulated for public review and comment. BPA will hold at least one public comment meeting about the Draft EIS in 2002. Comments on the Draft EIS will be considered and responded to by BPA in the Final EIS. A Final EIS is scheduled for publication in 2002. BPA’s subsequent decision will be documented in a Record of Decision.

### **For More Information**

If you have any questions about the proposal, please call me toll-free at 1-800-282-3713, call my direct number (509) 527-6211, or send an e-mail to [trosborn@bpa.gov](mailto:trosborn@bpa.gov). You may call or e-mail the Environmental Lead for the project, Kimberly St. Hilaire, at 503-230-5361, [krsthilaire@bpa.gov](mailto:krsthilaire@bpa.gov). Thank you for your interest in our work.

Sincerely,

Tom Osborn  
Project Manager

Enclosure: Maps, Comment Sheet